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INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS TO FOLLOW UP THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 47/191 of 22 December 1992, requested the Economic and Social Council at its organizational session for 1993 to set up a high-level Commission on Sustainable Development as a functional commission of the Council in accordance with Article 68 of the Charter of the United Nations in order to ensure the effective follow-up of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, as well as to enhance international cooperation and rationalize the intergovernmental decision-making capacity for the integration of environment and development issues and to examine the progress of the implementation of Agenda 21 at the national, regional and international levels, fully guided by the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and all other aspects of the Conference, in order to achieve sustainable development in all countries. The Assembly made a number of recommendations on the functions and terms of reference of the Commission (resolution 47/191, paras. 3-5).

2. The General Assembly also recommended that the Commission consist of representatives of 53 States elected by the Economic and Social Council from among the Member States of the United Nations and its specialized agencies for three-year terms, with due regard to equitable geographical distribution. The regional allocation of seats could be the same as in the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, as decided in Economic and Social Council

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* E/1993/2 and Add.1.

decision 1992/222 of 29 May 1992. Representation should be at a high level, including ministerial participation. Other Member States of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, as well as other observers of the United Nations may participate in the Commission in the capacity of observer, in accordance with established practice.

3. The Secretary-General wishes to remind the Council that in decision 1992/222, it decided on the following regional allocation of seats in the Commission for Science and Technology for Development:

(a) Thirteen seats for African States;

(b) Eleven seats for Asian States;

(c) Ten seats for Latin American and Caribbean States;

(d) Six seats for Eastern European States;

(e) Thirteen seats for Western European and other States.

4. The Council may wish to resume its organizational session on 12 February in order to hold elections to the Commission on Sustainable Development.

5. The General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit, for the consideration of the Economic and Social Council at its organizational session for 1993, his proposals on the rules of procedure of the Commission. The proposals of the Secretary-General are contained in document E/1993/12.

6. The General Assembly recommended that the Commission meet once a year for a period of two to three weeks. It was decided that the first substantive session of the Commission would be held in New York in 1993, without prejudice to the venue of future sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The understanding has been reached that the Issue Coordinator for item 79 (Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) of the agenda of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, Ambassador Razali Ismail (Malaysia), will continue to hold informal consultations on the venue of the future sessions of the Commission, to be decided on at a resumed forty-seventh session of the Assembly.

7. The General Assembly also recommended that in 1993, as a transitional measure, the Commission hold a short organizational session in New York. At that session, the Commission would elect its Bureau, consisting of a Chairperson, three Vice-Chairpersons and a Rapporteur, coming from each of the regional groups, decide on the agenda of its first substantive session and consider all other organizational issues as might be necessary. The agenda for the organizational session of the Commission should be decided on by the Council at its organizational session for 1993.

8. The General Assembly further recommended that the Commission, at its first substantive session, adopt a multi-year thematic programme of work that would provide a framework to assess progress achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21 and ensure an integrated approach to all of its environment and development components, as well as linkages between sectoral and cross-sectoral issues. The programme of work could consist of clusters that would integrate in an effective manner related sectoral and cross-sectoral components of Agenda 21 in such a way as to allow the Commission to review the progress of the implementation of the entire Agenda 21 by 1997. The programme of work could be adjusted, as the need arose, at future sessions of the Commission. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit his proposals for such a programme of work during the organizational session of the Commission.

9. The General Assembly recommended that, in order to carry out its functions and implement its work programme effectively, the Commission consider organizing its work along the following lines:

(a) Financial resources, mechanisms, transfer of technology, capacity-building, and other cross-sectoral issues;

(b) Review of implementation of Agenda 21 at the international level, as well as at the regional and national levels, including the means of implementation, in accordance with paragraph 12 of Assembly resolution 47/191 (see para. 8 above) and the functions of the Commission, taking into account, where appropriate, information regarding the progress in the implementation of relevant environmental conventions;

(c) A high-level meeting, with ministerial participation, to have an integrated overview of the implementation of Agenda 21, to consider emerging policy issues and to provide the necessary political impetus to the implementation of decisions of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and commitments contained therein.

The Assembly also recommended that the implementation of Agenda 21 be reviewed and considered in an integrated manner.

10. In the light of the above, the Council may wish to approve the following provisional agenda for the organizational session of the Commission on Sustainable Development:

(a) Election of the Chairperson and other members of the Bureau;

(b) Provisional agenda and organization of work of the first substantive session of the Commission;

(c) Outline of a multi-year programme of work for the Commission;

(d) Other organizational issues as may be necessary.

11. If the Council decides to elect the members of the Commission on 12 February 1993, the Secretary-General suggests that the organizational session of the Commission be held from 1 to 3 March 1993. The Secretary-General would like to remind the Council that travel expenses of representatives on the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council are paid for from the regular budget of the United Nations, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1798 (XVII), paragraph 3 (a) (ii).

12. Regarding the dates for the first substantive session of the Commission, the Secretary-General, bearing in mind the calendar of meetings of intergovernmental bodies for 1993, wishes to inform the Council that in order to avoid conflict with other meetings, the Commission could meet in New York for two or three weeks, from 30 August to 10 or 17 September. The report of the Commission would then be considered by the Economic and Social Council at a resumed substantive session. Alternatively, the Council may decide that it is preferable to hold the first substantive session of the Commission earlier in the year. If the Council so decides, the Commission could meet immediately prior to the substantive session of the Council for two weeks, from 14 to 25 June. The Council should bear in mind that these dates overlap with the fortieth session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme, which is scheduled to meet in New York from 1 to 22 June. Moreover, meeting on these dates could entail additional expenses, since regular conference and interpretation services may not be available at Headquarters during that period.

13. In the light of the above, the specific matters for decision at the organizational session for 1993 of the Economic and Social Council under item 5 of its provisional agenda are:

(a) Establishment of the high-level Commission on Sustainable Development (see para. 1 above);

(b) The regional allocation of seats in the Commission (see paras. 2 and 3 above);

(c) The date of the elections to the Commission (see para. 4 above);

(d) The rules of procedure of the Commission (see para. 5 above and document E/1993/12);

(e) The agenda for the organizational session of the Commission (see paras. 7-10 above);

(f) The dates for the organizational and first substantive sessions of the Commission (see paras. 6, 11 and 12 above).